Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Radio Service

OFFICE OF
INFORMATION

1.9
3 Hr
Im
rsv.

LIBRARY
RECEIVED
☆ JAN 21 1937 ☆
U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Monday, January 25, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "WHEN WE WERE VERY YOUNG." Facts from the Federal Food and Drug Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

--ooOoo--

This month marks an important anniversary in Washington, D. C., for just thirty years ago this January the Pure Food Law became effective. Of course there wasn't any Federal Food and Drug Administration thirty years ago -- in those days the Pure Food Law was enforced by another branch of the Department of Agriculture, the old Bureau of Chemistry. The Federal Food and Drug Administration was established in 1927.

At present, about seven hundred men and women are with the Food and Drug Administration. Forty-seven of this number have been in the work for thirty years or more. But you wouldn't believe it, our reporter says, to talk with them. They're all young and enthusiastic, and working just as hard for pure foods and drugs now as they were thirty years ago. Have they discovered an "Elixir of Youth"? They've helped remove thousands of fake remedies from the market; they have protected the public zealously from worthless cure-alls and dangerous drugs. In the meantime, have they discovered something that keeps them forever young?

"Whatever it is," says our correspondent, "I hope it is correctly labeled, and not liable to seizure for any reason whatsoever."

Now one of the pioneers in Food and Drug work is Walter G. Campbell, Chief of the Administration, who began thirty years ago as a young inspector. Quoting Mr. Campbell:

"The passage of the Federal Food and Drugs Act, thirty years ago, was the climax of a struggle of many years waged by Dr. Harvey W. Wiley and his associates, by militant State officers, and by public-spirited representatives of the consumer and honest business. The present law drew many of its best provisions from State laws, which even thirty years ago were effectually protecting the public in a few States. The job of enforcing a law like the Food and Drugs Act is not only one of absorbing interest, but one which has a public-service appeal. This is undoubtedly the reason why a surprisingly large number of men and women in the Bureau of Chemistry during the first year of enforcement, 1907, are still connected with the Food and Drug Administration," concludes Mr. Campbell.

Well, maybe that's their secret, comments our correspondent -- maybe these old-timers stay young because their work is of "absorbing interest", and because they are devoting their lives to public service.

Now let's hear from the ladies. Mrs. Mary T. Read, who retired two years ago, has had forty-seven years of food and drug work. She has written a few notes about the early days, under the title, "When We Were Very Young." From now on, I'm quoting Mrs. Read.

"As far back as 1869," says Mrs. Read, "the Department of Agriculture recognized the importance of honest food for the cow in the pasture, and for the barnyard porker, but it was not until nine years later that food for the animal, man, was thought worthy of consideration. Even then, attention was restricted to a few samples of tea, and sausage. It's a far cry from the army of trained specialists of today who protect the consumer of foods and drugs, to the small squad of sturdy pioneers who fired the first shot and carried on the fight through years of opposition, abuse, and recrimination, to a successful conclusion.

"In 1889," still quoting Mrs. Read, "the Division of Chemistry consisted of only eight workers. The scientific force was headed by Doctor Wiley, the 'boss.' An old picture of this group of men, heavily bearded and wearing very small, flat, melon-shaped derby hats, has brought many a smile to the lips of some of us old ones who enjoy reminiscing, but the work they did, in building the foundation for a great structure of law enforcement, brought many a frown to the brows of the opposition.

"In the very early days, the Division of Chemistry had headquarters in an old brick house on Fourteenth Street. And long before we had a Pure Food Law, things were humming in the food-testing laboratories. Every food from soup to nuts, and nostrums to cure every human ill, were eagerly gathered in. The laboratories were deluged with samples. Everybody worked early and late, excepting Tom, the office cat, who waxed fat and lazy on the crumbs that fell from the laboratory tables. Then some food analyst got a bright idea, and the alley cat was lured in to have some of the cure-alls tried on him.

"As the campaign for a law governing foods and drugs progressed, it was heartily championed by women's clubs throughout the country. Doctor Wiley was a convincing speaker and was much in demand for talks before such organizations. On mornings when the 'boss' appeared at 8:30, attired in Prince Albert and a silk topper somewhat out of date but cherished because it had been purchased in dear old London, the office force knew that a group of women was due to get the latest news from the storm center, and at the same time to enjoy some of Doctor Wiley's rare wit, always one of his strongest aids in any crisis. Those long-ago days were busy, turbulent days," concludes Mrs. Read, "but withal, happy days, because of the achievement through earnest endeavor."

- - -

Next week, says our official correspondent, we'll resume business as usual, with a report from the Food and Drug Administration entitled: "How Much Orange Juice in Orangeade?" Listen in next Monday at this time and you will learn how definitions are made -- definitions for such fruit-juice beverages as orangeade and lime rickey.

*****